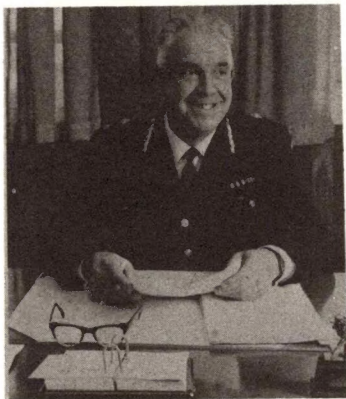




ARMS CODE

ISSUED BY THE NEW ZEALAND POLICE





"STAY ALIVE"

I am pleased to introduce this second edition of the Arms Code. The safety rules are unaltered but there are a few changes in the law relating to possession of firearms, principally in respect to minors.

As you will see, the safety rules are based on common sense and experience. There are not many laws concerning firearms: their aims are rather obvious—designed to keep people alive.

Always remember that a firearm is a lethal weapon and no amount of subsequent regret can ever restore a life lost through carelessness.

The information in this book is the basis for testing applicants for firearms permits. However applicants are strongly recommended to take advantage of courses in firearm safety conducted in their own area by the National Mountain Safety Committee or the New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association.

If you see firearms being mishandled or discharged dangerously I would be grateful if you point out the error in a friendly manner. By following the advice given in this book and encouraging others to do so you will be making the best possible contribution to firearms safety.

Wishing you happy hunting.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "W. H. A. Sharp". The script is cursive and fluid.

W. H. A. SHARP,
Commissioner of Police.

2-00

FIREARMS SAFETY IN THE HOME



Children should never play with firearms.

Every month some child is killed because firearms have been carelessly left within its reach. These accidents would not occur if common-sense precautions are taken.

Firearms and ammunition should be stored separately, preferably under lock and key. If it is not possible to lock away the firearm, the bolt or some other vital part should be removed and kept in a separate place. Before storing a firearm the following steps should be taken :

- (1) Make sure it is unloaded.
- (2) Clean it properly.
- (3) See that it is inaccessible to children or unauthorised persons.

Never take a loaded firearm into a house, nor load a firearm indoors. This golden rule must be obeyed without exception.

Under no circumstances should children be permitted to play with a firearm.

Before starting to clean or work on a firearm, always see that it is unloaded. Live cartridges should never be used to check the working mechanism.

When you are going to use the firearm and take it from where it is kept, examine it to make sure :

- (1) It is not loaded.
- (2) The barrel is not blocked.
- (3) All grease is removed from the barrel and action.

TRANSPORT OF FIREARMS

Unless you have a permit, it is unlawful to carry in a vehicle a firearm loaded with a cartridge, whether in the breech, magazine or barrel. This applies equally whether the vehicle is on a public road or private land. There are two reasons for this law. The jerking motion of the vehicle could cause firearms to discharge accidentally. This law also prevents the dangerous practice of shooting from a moving vehicle.

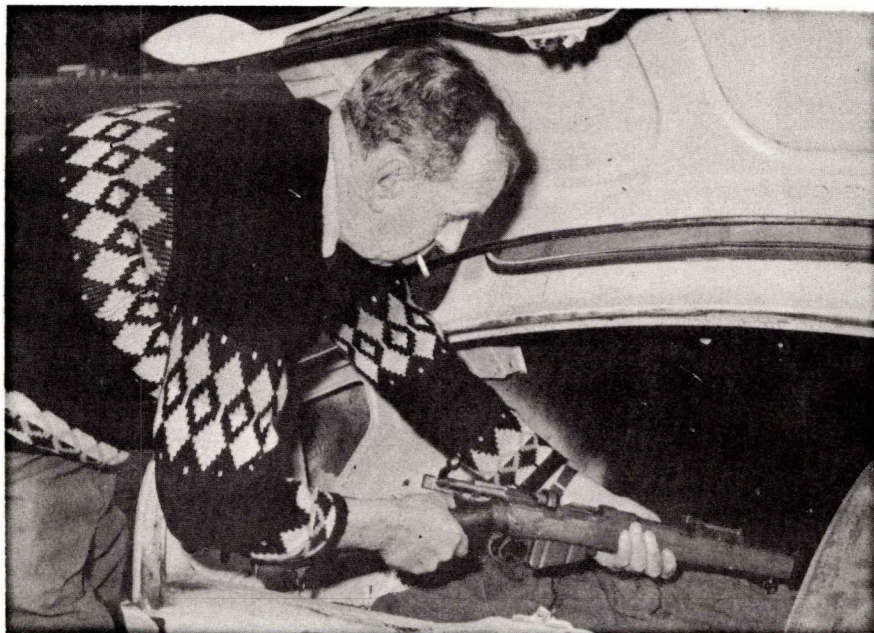
Similarly, it is unlawful to carry a loaded firearm in an aeroplane without a permit from the Director of Civil Aviation. The operators of public transport (buses, trains, planes, and ferries) generally insist that passengers, where possible, remove bolts from their firearms.

Be careful when removing uncased firearms from vehicles. Never pull a firearm towards you by the muzzle. Deaths have occurred because the firearm has been carelessly left loaded and the trigger or hammer has caught on some object as the firearm has been dragged out.

Never throw your firearm into the boot or back of a car. In fact never throw it anywhere or drop it—always place it. Remember that it is a lethal weapon.



This is dangerous because breach is closed and muzzle pointing towards body.



Correct—bolt open and muzzle pointing away.

FIVE BASIC SAFETY RULES FOR HUNTING

Rule 1—Check Your Firearm

Before taking your firearm into the field—

CHECK that it is not loaded.

CHECK that there are no obstructions in the barrel or action.

CHECK that grease or other protective covering is removed.

CHECK that you have the correct ammunition.

When entering a hut or camp site—

CHECK again that the firearm is not loaded.

CHECK that your companions do likewise.

Before returning to your vehicle or home—

CHECK that the firearm is unloaded.

At all times—

CHECK that the muzzle is pointing in a safe direction.

This is one of the most important safety precautions and should be faithfully followed—whether the firearm is loaded or not—until it becomes an invariable habit.

Rule 2—Load Magazine Only When You Reach Your Shooting Ground

Only when you have reached your shooting ground should you load any ammunition into your firearm, and then only into the magazine—never into the breech.

The firearm is then carried with the bolt or action closed on an EMPTY chamber. The cartridges are readily available from the magazine and it is only a matter of a split second to open the bolt or action to feed a round into the chamber.

Rule 3—Use a Half-open Bolt or Action When in a State of "Semi-readiness"

Rifles (except self-loading)—The state of "semi-readiness" is reached when you have seen game or expect to flush it at any moment. The firearm should be held in both hands and with a cartridge pushed partly forward into the breech.

Do not close the action unless you know you will have time to make a safe shot. If you do close the action but then decide not to take a shot, revert to the "semi-ready" state with a half-open action.

The most experienced and safest hunters load the breech only when they are immediately about to shoot. The beginner should follow this example.

Shotguns and Self-loading Firearms—Because it is physically impossible to apply this rule to these firearms, it is recommended that when you have seen or expect to flush game at any moment you load the firearm and place the previously tested safety catch on "safe". If you release the safety catch but decide not to shoot, then reapply the safety catch. Whenever rounds are in the breech it is imperative to be most careful that the muzzle is pointing in a safe direction.

Rule 4—Identify Your Target

Your target must be positively identified before firing at it. If in doubt do not shoot.

*Sound
shots* Do NOT fire at movement.

Do NOT fire at a colour.

Do NOT fire at a shape.

Sometimes when a hunter is keyed up and straining to sight game his imagination plays tricks on his vision, with the result that entirely different objects assume the appearance of game.

Further confusion can be caused by other hunters in the vicinity making noises imitating the calls of game. Even the sight of a pair of antlers may be a hunter carrying out his trophy. It is most unwise to disguise yourself as game—you will probably only fool a nearby hunter, much to your own misfortune.

Failure to observe this rule of "identifying the target beyond all doubt" is the greatest cause of hunting deaths.



Rule 5—Consider Your Firing Zone

The firing zone consists not only of the area between you and your target, but also the area beyond the target which is within the range of your projectile. Both these areas should be clear of any persons, stock, or buildings and anything that is likely to cause a ricochet, that is, a deflection of the projectile. Ricochets can also be caused by flat, hard substances, rocks or snow, or even water if fired into at a low angle.

Remember that a high-powered rifle has a range up to $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles. If you are using telescopic sights you can see much further but your vision to each side is much narrower and consequently there is a greater danger of persons moving into your firing zone without your knowledge.

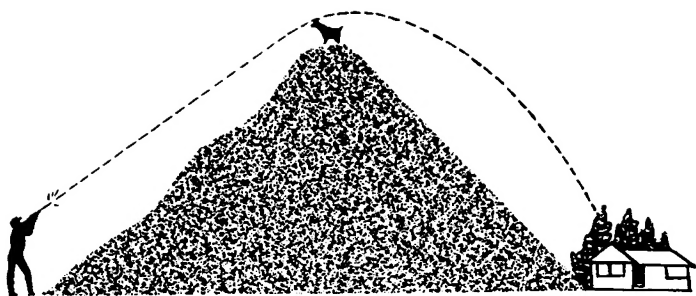
A charge of shot from a shotgun has a wide spread, particularly at longer ranges. When shooting near heavy cover extra care should be taken.

When considering shooting over a ridge or the brow of a hill, have some thought about where the bullet might land.

If in any doubt about the position of your companions, do not shoot. In an organised hunt, if you are placed in a certain position, do not move until all of the party are made aware that you are going to change it.

Bear in mind that, when you follow a moving target with your muzzle, your firing zone changes rapidly. Therefore be sure of the position of other hunters so that, as you swing your muzzle in an arc, they are not caught in the path between your firearm and the target or even beyond the target but still within range. This applies particularly to shotguns.

Do not shoot at night unless you are absolutely certain it is safe to do so. Obviously, shooting at night is very dangerous because you cannot see your firing zone. Remember that a spotlight illuminates only a small portion of the firing zone and only a fraction of the projectile's range.



Your Bullets May Land Miles Away



The Danger of Changing Your Line of Fire



Spotlights Don't Reveal the Background



***Riverbeds—
Danger of
Bullet Ricochet***

PRECAUTIONS WHEN CARRYING FIREARMS

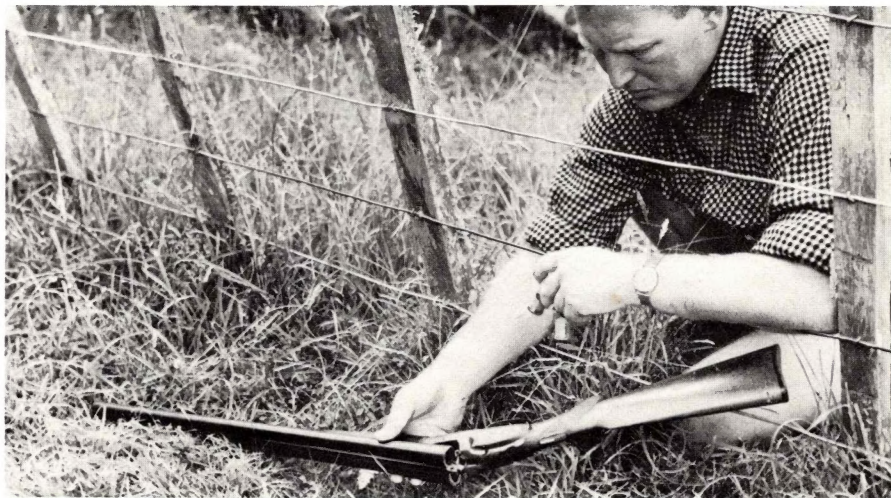
In heavy rain or snow, to prevent water building up in the barrel, keep the muzzle down but watch that it does not come into contact with the ground and pick up anything that will block it.

Statistics show that a big proportion of deaths and injuries occur when a shooter is trying to climb over or through a fence with a loaded firearm which accidentally discharges when it catches in the fence or if the shooter over-balances. This danger could, of course, be avoided by observing the second basic rule: Don't load until the hunting area is reached. Even if his firearm is unloaded, a person intending to climb a fence should carefully ease the firearm (with its action open) under the bottom strand and place it on the other side. If there are two people, one should climb the fence unimpeded and the other pass him both firearms, one at a time, either over the top or under the bottom strand. Likewise the action should be open or the gun broken.

Other danger spots are ditches and streams. Do not jump over them when carrying a firearm. The best method is to walk through the stream or ditch. If there are two people, one can cross first unarmed, and the other pass the firearms over, provided, of course, the stream or ditch is not too wide. Never throw your firearm across a stream.

Another common cause of mishaps is when the shooter stumbles and falls. Again, many of these accidents could be avoided by observing the before-mentioned second basic rule. These accidents can also take place after the shooter has loaded at the hunting ground or even later when he is in semi-readiness. Care must be taken that all attention is not directed at sighting the game at the expense of overlooking potholes and obstructions in your pathway.

Always carry your firearm in such a way that you can control the direction of the muzzle should you stumble and fall.



Safe practice—breach open and unloaded.



Don't climb fence with gun.



Right way.

SAFETY CATCHES

It is unwise to rely on safety catches: they are only trigger-locking devices and, like all mechanical contrivances, may become worn and may not work properly. Hence they can give a false sense of security.

HANDING FIREARMS TO ANOTHER

Never hand to another person a firearm with the bolt or action closed. When you are handing over a firearm follow this drill—

Point the muzzle in a safe direction, and open the bolt or action to make sure that the breech, magazine, and feed mechanism are empty.

Also, when receiving a firearm, insist on the above procedure being followed.

TREAT ALL FIREARMS AS LOADED

The greatest single cause of accidents is firearms being carelessly left loaded. Either the user forgets it is still loaded or someone takes it up and wrongly assumes it is unloaded. Remember the only safe firearm is an empty firearm, that is, no cartridge is in any part (magazine, breech, or feed mechanism).

LAW RELATING TO POSSESSION OF FIREARMS

Importation of Firearms

Anyone intending to import a firearm must get a permit from the Police.

Permits to Procure

A permit must be obtained from the Police before one buys, borrows, uses, or receives a rifle or shotgun. Similarly it is an offence to sell, lend, or give a rifle or shotgun to a person who has not received a permit from the Police.

A person must be 16 before he can be granted a permit to procure a firearm.

Registration of Firearms

Rifles—After an applicant has obtained a permit for a rifle he can take possession of it, but must get the person from whom he obtains the rifle to fill in the particulars on the back of the permit. Then the applicant must take the rifle and the permit back to the Arms Office.

Within 1 month of obtaining possession of the rifle the person concerned must have it registered at the Police Arms Office nearest to his address.

When the registered owner of a rifle changes his address he must notify the nearest Arms Office within 30 days. If he intends to take the rifle out of New Zealand he must notify his nearest Arms Office at least 4 days before he is leaving. The owner of a rifle must notify his nearest Arms Office forthwith if his rifle is lost, stolen, or destroyed.

A firearm owner's employee or a member of his family over 16 is entitled to use the rifle if he is included in the certificate of registration.

Shotguns—These do not have to be registered, nor need the above requirements be observed. The shotgun owner should retain his permit to procure as evidence of his lawful possession. One permit covers one or more shotguns.

Minors

A person under 16 cannot buy, borrow, use, receive, or possess a rifle, shotgun, or airgun but he may use these under the immediate supervision of the owner or under proper supervision on a properly constructed firing range.

A person over 16 and under 20 requires a permit to obtain an airgun or antique but does not have to register it. A person over 20 does not need a permit to obtain an airgun or antique.

Pistols

A pistol means any firearm which is designed or adapted to be held and fired with one hand and includes any firearm that is less than 30 inches long.

A permit for a pistol cannot be granted unless for special reasons. Afterwards it must be registered.

Unlawful Weapons

These include automatic pistols, machine guns, grenades, gas dischargers, mortars, mines, rocket launchers. These require a licence (from the Commissioner of Police) which can be granted only in a special case and for a special reason. It is also unlawful to have possession of any ammunition for or part of an unlawful weapon.

COMMON OFFENCES WITH FIREARMS

- (1) To deliberately point the muzzle of a firearm (loaded or not) at anybody.
- (2) To go on to private land without the authority of the occupier or other lawful authority and by means of a firearm disturb any domestic animal thereon.
- (3) To discharge a firearm on any private land without reasonable cause or lawful authority.
- (4) To discharge a firearm from any place, vehicle, vessel, aircraft, or hovercraft into or across any private land.
- (5) While under the influence of drink or drug, to be in charge of a firearm.
- (6) To discharge or deal with a firearm in a manner likely to injure or endanger the safety of any person or property.
- (7) To discharge or deal with a firearm with reckless disregard for the safety of others.
- (8) To cause bodily injury by carelessly using a firearm.
- (9) To discharge a firearm in a public place.
- (10) To discharge a firearm so near to a public place as to endanger, annoy, or frighten members of the public.
- (11) To discharge a firearm in or near a dwellinghouse.
- (12) To have possession of a firearm without lawful, proper, and sufficient purpose (this applies even when the possessor has a permit or the firearm is registered).
- (13) To leave a loaded firearm in circumstances endangering life (without taking reasonable precautions).



Shooter commits 3 offences: carrying loaded firearm in vehicle, shooting in public place, shooting on to private land.

MECHANICAL FITNESS OF FIREARMS

As 16 percent of firearms accidents are caused by defective firearms, you are urged to have a competent gunsmith periodically check these items—

1. Headspace.
2. Firing pin protrusion and shape.
3. Tightness of action and stock.
4. Condition of barrel and chamber.
5. General condition of firearm, including action and stock.
6. Safety catch (particularly on shotgun and self-loading rifles).
7. Trigger pull—it is recommended that weights of pull should be not less than the following—

<i>Type of Firearm</i>	<i>Minimum Trigger Pull</i>
.22" rimfire rifles ..	3.5 lb.
Centre-fire sporting rifles ..	4 lb.
Single trigger shotguns ..	3.5 lb.
Double trigger shotguns ..	3.5 lb first trigger and 5 lb second trigger.
Target rifles ..	as regulated by competition rules.
Set triggers ..	follow manufacturers' recommendations.

Self-loading high-power rifles require a heavier pull than conventional firearms and the manufacturer's recommendation should be strictly adhered to.

Warning—

1. Do NOT exchange bolts, bolt heads or other action parts. These must be fitted by a competent gunsmith.
2. The use of preserving rods and barrel plugs is not recommended.
3. It is dangerous to tamper with your firearm. Even for what appear to be minor repairs or adjustments, the firearm should be taken to a competent gunsmith.

AMMUNITION

Old ammunition should not be used. It is liable to cause misfiring, rupturing of cases, and blocking of the barrel and could result in serious damage to the firearm or injury to the shooter.

A heavily "dumdummyed" or clipped bullet can cause the jacket to be stripped and remain in the barrel and form a dangerous blockage. Clipping of ammunition also has an adverse effect on accuracy.

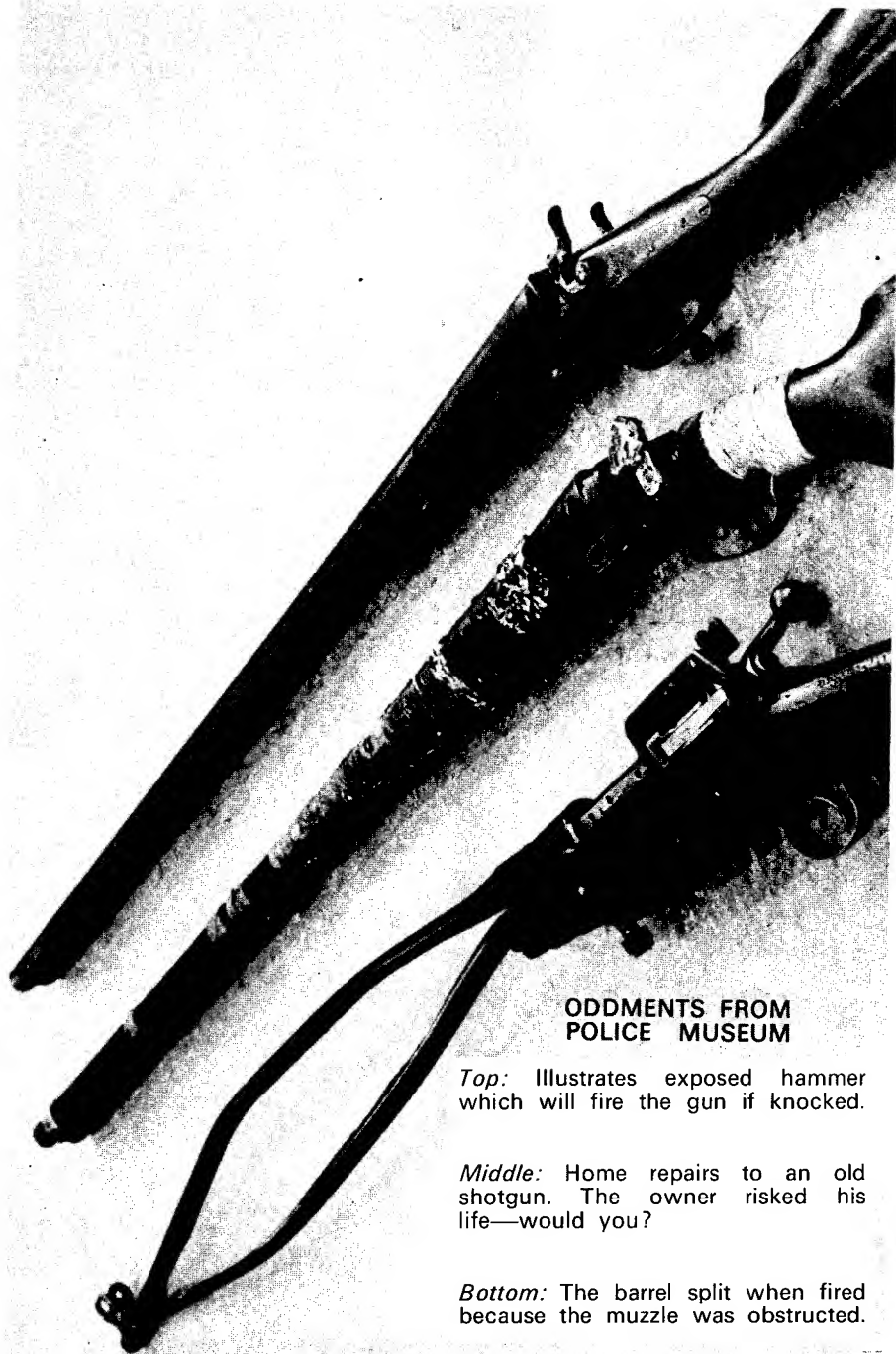
Ammunition which has become wet can cause a substantial strain on the action, possibly damaging the firearm or injuring the shooter. Ammunition should never be dried in an oven or subjected to heat.

The use of ammunition belts is not recommended. They tend to get caught in scrub and are uncomfortable for climbing; ammunition may fall out and get lost or may stick in the loops. It is preferable to carry ammunition in a pouch.

Modern cartridges used in very old shotguns can cause the firearm to blow up. This is because barrels of some old shotguns were not as strongly constructed as in modern shotguns.

Reloading fired rifle and shotgun cartridges should be learnt from an experienced handloader—inquire at your local sports store, deerstalkers' association, or re-loaders' club.

It is unlawful to send ammunition by mail. This includes a loaded firearm.



**ODDMENTS FROM
POLICE MUSEUM**

Top: Illustrates exposed hammer which will fire the gun if knocked.

Middle: Home repairs to an old shotgun. The owner risked his life—would you?

Bottom: The barrel split when fired because the muzzle was obstructed.

"LOCK, STOCK, AND BARREL"

This familiar expression gives the names of the three basic parts of a firearm.

The **LOCK** is the mechanism that fires the cartridge.

The **STOCK** is the part by which the firearm is held.

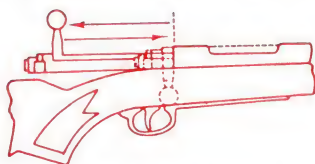
The **BARREL** is the tube through which the projectile is shot.

The front end of the barrel where the projectile emerges is the muzzle. One hundred years ago most firearms were muzzle-loaders—their barrels were sealed at the rear and loaded with powder and projectiles from the muzzle.

In the modern firearm the rear end of the barrel is open and contains the cartridge chamber, into which the cartridge fits with precision. The barrel is locked behind the cartridge by means of a breech block or bolt. This contains the firing pin and the main spring, which drives the firing pin forward to ignite the cartridge. The lock or mechanical system of a modern firearm is commonly referred to as the "**ACTION**", which is the term used throughout this booklet.

Footnote—The terms chamber and breech mean the same.

The **BOLT ACTION** type is worked by lifting the bolt handle, then pulling the bolt back. This pulls the previously fired cartridge case out of the chamber and ejects it from the firearm. When the bolt handle is pushed forward again into position it pushes a fresh cartridge which has risen from the magazine or feedway into the cartridge chamber. Then, when the bolt handle is turned down, the bolt is held firmly in position. The movement of the bolt compresses the main spring—the firearm is then cocked and will fire when the trigger is pulled.

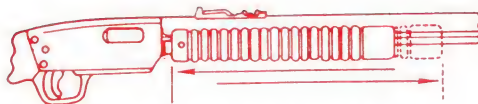


BOLT ACTION
(Right or Left Handed)



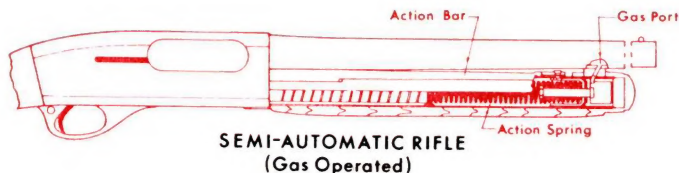
LEVER ACTION

The **LEVER ACTION** type resembles the bolt action but instead of a bolt handle it has a lever combined with the trigger guard. Pushing the lever downward unlocks the bolt and moves it backwards. Bringing the lever back into position pushes the bolt forward and locks it. During the movement of the lever the main spring is compressed. The firearm is then cocked and will fire when the trigger is pulled.



PUMP ACTION

The **PUMP ACTION** type is worked by pulling the fore-end backward, then pushing it forward. The backward movement unlocks the bolt and ejects the fired case and the forward movement pushes a new cartridge from the magazine into the cartridge chamber. In the process, the movement of the fore-end compresses the main spring, cocking the firearm, which will then fire on a pull of the trigger.



The SELF-LOADING, AUTO-LOADING, or SEMI-AUTOMATIC is a type in which the bolt has to be moved by hand only for the first shot from the magazine. Thereafter ejection and loading is automatic. Therefore each time the trigger is pulled a cartridge will be fired.

BREAKING ACTION firearms include both double barrel and some single shot types. The action breaks at the breech face to allow a cartridge to be loaded directly into the chamber and so that a fired case can be removed. The movement of "breaking" the firearm cocks it and it will fire if the trigger is pulled.

Warning—

Some firearms of the types already described have exposed hammers and therefore require more care in handling as exposed hammers are liable to cause accidental discharge.

Similarly with most types of firearms when the action is closed but uncocked, if there is a round in the breech the firing pin then rests against the base of the cartridge and the firearm may go off if dropped, knocked or jolted even though the trigger has not been touched.

Firearms of the types described are sometimes fitted with tubular magazines. These require extreme care because cartridges can get lodged in the magazine or feed mechanism and thus constitute a danger when unloading.

SAFETY RULES AT FIRING RANGES

Every range has its own rules to suit its particular requirements. When using a range the shooter should first make himself conversant with the rules, then fully observe them.

Generally all range rules are built around the following six fundamental rules—

- (1) Firearms must be handled with the utmost care at all times and be carried with the bolt or breech open.
- (2) It is forbidden to handle another shooter's firearm without his permission except when a range officer or other responsible official considers it has been left in a dangerous position or manner.
- (3) Firearms should be loaded only at the firing point and the shooter must ensure that the muzzle is pointed in a safe direction at all times.
- (4) Only the squad or detail actually shooting shall be at the firing point and the complete squad or detail must remain there until released by the range officer.
- (5) On the raising of a red flag from the butts, or on the command "cease fire" from the range officer, all firing must cease immediately; all shooters must extract cartridges from the breech and leave open all bolts and actions.
- (6) Shooters must ensure that no cartridges are left in the firearm before leaving the firing point.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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N.Z. Antique Arms Association
N.Z. Deerstalkers' Association
N.Z. Federated Farmers
N.Z. Forest Service
N.Z. Sports Dealers Federation
National Mountain Safety Council
National Shooting Federation
National Parks Authority
North Island Acclimatisation Council
N.Z. Army
South Island Acclimatisation Council
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